DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 698 CS 507 887

AUTHOR Hauser, Deborah
TITLE The Budget Crisis and Women's Experience: Part-Time Faculty at California State University, Chico.
PUB DATE Feb 92
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western States Communication Association (63rd, Boise, ID, February 21-25, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Case Studies; Educational Finance; Educational Trends; Financial Problems; Higher Education; *Interviews; *Part Time Faculty; Research Methodology; *Retrenchment; *Teacher Attitudes; *Women Faculty
IDENTIFIERS California State University Chico; Interpretive Research

ABSTRACT

The budget crisis in higher education offers one arena in which to investigate the impact of the current recession. The effects of a university funding crisis are usually presented in quantitative terms, such as how many positions will be cut or how much departmental budgets and salaries might be affected. However, such crises should also be discussed in qualitative terms. For example, studies of the effects of a budget crisis in higher education should look at the personal experiences of those who perhaps feel the crisis most directly, the part-time faculty of an institution. Specifically, interviews were carried out with two female part-time faculty members faced with the effects of the economic crisis at California State University, Chico. The methodology of the study was based on a phenomenological approach. The findings corroborate other research on women's experience which suggests that women tend to identify self with other and to fuse the often separated categories of personal and professional life. The threat of lay-off caused the women in this study to violate this identification, however, and instead to exist on the boundary of that fusion. Their world was characterized as a tense, negative experience that threw into doubt fundamental beliefs about self and work. Findings suggest that a solely quantitative investigation would not reveal the depth of detail and description which qualitative interview techniques and phenomenological interpretation can provide. (An appendix includes numerous excerpts from the interviews.) (HB)

The Budget Crisis and Women's Experience: Part-time Faculty at California State University, Chico

Deborah Hauser

Department of Human Communication Studies

California State University, Chico

Chico, CA 95929-0502

Running Head: BUDGET CRISIS

Paper presented at the February, 1992, meeting of the Western Speech Communication Association, Boise, ID

Abstract

The budget crisis in higher education offers one arena in which to investigate the impact of the current recession. Although the effects of a university funding crisis are usually presented in quantitative terms (how many positions will be cut or how much money we will have, for example), the author suggests that such crises should be discussed in qualitative terms. Studies of the effects of a budget crisis in higher education should include a look at the personal experience of those who feel the crisis most directly: part-time instructors.

This paper presents a phenomenological investigation of the effect of the budget crisis on the experiences of women part-time faculty. The findings corroborate other research on women's experience which suggests that women tend to identify self with other and to fuse the often separated categories of personal and professional life. The threat of lay-off, however, has caused the women in this study to violate this identification, and instead to exist on the boundary of that fusion. Their world becomes a tense, negative experience that throws into doubt some of their most fundamental beliefs about themselves and their work. It is concluded that a solely quantitative investigation of this phenomenon would not reveal the depth of detail and rich description that can emerge through a combination of qualitative interview techniques and phenomenological interpretation.

California's educational system has begun to see and feel the effects of the "budget crisis." Most people, both within and without the educational system, discuss this crisis in quantitative terms: *How many* positions will be terminated, *how much* money will we have to work with, etc. This focus is immediately surprising to someone with any degree of language-sensitivity since it depersonalizes an issue that is inherently personal. The budget "crisis" implies a subject, a person (or persons) who experiences that crisis. This paper, therefore, explores the budget crisis not in terms of its myriad (and confusing) objective and quantitative aspects, but in terms of its effect on individual experience.

The paper is divided into two sections: methodology and analysis. In the methodology section, I offer the reasoning behind the sample, method, and particular techniques I have chosen. I also discuss the issue of transcription in phenomenological methodology. In the analysis section, I "do" (or show how I have done) the description, reduction and interpretation of three interviews. In the description section I describe the interview experience and present respondent statements which were extracted from the interview. In the reduction section I reduce the thematic topics, subtopics and "revelatory phrases" revealed in the description to their essential elements, and identify the structure that emerges from these elements. Finally, in the interpretation section I offer an explanation of how the essential elements and "key revelatory phrases" fit into a broader scheme that includes the respondents' lives and social surroundings.

Methodology

The budget crisis issue is quite broad and complex. A variety of factors undoubtedly affect the experience of people involved in the crisis. As subjects for my study, I chose part-time, female faculty members. The reasons for this are several. I assumed that part-time faculty are more immediately affected by the budget cuts; most of them, in fact, will lose their livelihood as a result. Their experience in their departments and in the broader educational institution will be more severely affected than that of full-time, tenured faculty members who probably face no immediate threat to their welfare. However, regardless of whether or not part-timers are more severely affected than full-timers, I anticipate that their experience will emerge as meaningful in itself.

I chose to approach only female faculty because I wanted to explicate women's experience, which I believe is traditionally undervalued and understudied in empirical research (Kramarae, cited in Foss & Foss, 1989). The explicit focus on women's experience places this study within the paradigm of feminist research and philosophy. As I will explain shortly, the method most conducive to the explication of experience in general (phenomenology) is also most conducive to women's experience in particular (Langellier & Hall, 1989). Therefore studying women through phenomenological interviews yields a close relationship among theory, method, and methodology. Lastly, I felt that as a woman researcher, I would be both more effective and happier researching subjects with whom I share a basic understanding and certain life experiences.

In order to study experience, I chose the qualitative interview technique to generate the data, and the method of phenomenological interpretation to explicate the data. According to Langellier & Hall (1989), the qualitative interview is probably the best method for accessing "personal narratives--the stories people tell about their experiences." Rather than abstracting and distancing the researcher from the focus of study, "face-to-face interview[s]. . . provide the richest access to human experience" (Langellier & Hall, 1989). The qualitative interview is especially appropriate for the explication of women's experience, since women's communication is characterized by oral narrative (Presnell, 1989; Langellier & Hall, 1989) and their lives are characterized by close relationships (Langellier & Hall, 1989).

Langellier & Hall's (1989) description of the connection between feminist research and phenomenology implies an integral relationship between phenomenology and the qualitative interview technique. Face-to-face, open-ended, dialogic and participatory interviewing will produce a text reflecting personal, existential experience--the experience discussed by the respondent in her responses (already a description, reduction and interpretation of the experience being recalled) and the experience of the interview process itself. Phenomenological interpretation is the most appropriate method for explicating the human experience that emerges from the qualitative interview.

Specific steps were taken to avoid the distancing, abstracting, and objectifying tendencies that contaminate many research projects.[1] It is assumed that such tendencies cloud, rather than clarify, the explication of experience, which is by nature immediate, concrete, and subjective. The steps taken include the avoidance of predetermined categories or terms of analysis in order to let the experience emerge naturally from the interview process; a reciprocal sharing of personal experience by the researcher; an inversion of the interviewer/interviewee hierarchy through the selection of respondents who were higher in terms of age and organizational position than the researcher; compatriotic and conversational nonverbal behaviors by the researcher; continual affirmations by the researcher, both verbal and nonverbal; and the stipulation that the outcome of the research would be made available to the respondents for their perusal, critique and response. The respondents were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. They were encouraged to describe their experience of the crisis in their own terms; in this way the interview technique avoided the tendency for the researcher to categorize the experience from the outside. Finally, the researcher attempted to make explicit and then "bracket" her theoretical presuppositions, particularly notions about the particularly "female" elements of the experience. The experience reported in this

[1] I use the term "contaminate" intentionally, realizing that this term is commonly used by quantitative researchers to describe the effect of the researcher's "interference" on the study. Studies designed to explicate the experience of a phenomenon, however, are contaminated by just those objectifying methods that quantitative researchers hold dear, not by the presence of the researcher. The presence of the researcher is in fact an essential feature of the method and the methodology.

paper thus arose from terms and descriptions that occurred in the experience as lived by the respondents.

Before moving to a description of the experience, the issue of transcription must be addressed. At first, I very faithfully transcribed the interviews word-for-word, pause-for-pause, sigh-for-sigh. However, as this process progressed, it became apparent that a transcription could never capture every nuance of the interview. It was also very difficult not to impose external factors on the information that emerged in the interviews. The desire to explain the respondents' descriptions in my own terms and in linear form was very strong. I was constantly plagued by the idea that I was transcribing inessential, irrelevant elements of the experience.

Finally, due to time constraints, I decided to forgo transcribing the last interview. While this means that my data were not uniform, I do not feel that this poses a problem for my study. Because in the first two interviews I was so conscious of the impulse to put the respondents' descriptions into my own terms, I made every effort to "bracket" that impulse and to attend very carefully to the experience as lived by the respondents. The data I collected (or created) in both written and oral form is a transcription of the lived experience of the interview. The written transcription is twice-removed, while the audio tape is once-removed, from the original experience. Thus the phrases pulled from the tape as an oral transcript are not altogether different from those which emerge from the written transcripts.

Analysis

Description

The first step in phenomenological interpretation is the description of the experience. Phenomenology assumes that the experience is lived as it is described; there is no experience until the respondent puts it into words: "Language. . . [is] seen as a mode of human existence, that is, as a medium of man's [sic] ongoing self-discovery and self-disclosure" (Dallmayr, 1984). The experience of the interview is an immediate experience of the phenomenon of the budget crisis as lived through the words, for "words and speech emerge as 'the presence of thought in the phenomenal world and, moreover, not its clothing but its token or its body'" (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Dallmayr, 1984). In the descriptive step, there are two ways to explicate the interview experience. Lanigan (1988c) explains the descriptive step in his semiotic phenomenology in terms of the question: "What is the thematic context?" (p. 148). Nelson (1989) relates phenomenological description more directly to the statements that emerge in the interview. To accommodate both interpretations of phenomenology, this section will describe first the interview situation (context) and then the respondents' descriptions of the experience.

The interviews were semi-structured. Eleven open-ended questions were constructed to guide the interview process. Each of these questions had several (possible) subparts. As Langellier & Hall (1989) advocate, although the questions were prestructured, "the interviewer did not adhere to them strictly; rather the interviewer followed the interviewee's lead as the interview unfolded" (206). In

fact, the researcher was continuously surprised by how many of her prestructured questions were answered very quickly in the interview process, and then elaborated upon in interesting and unforeseeable ways throughout the remainder of the interview.

The interviews were conducted in the respondents' "work areas." Two of these areas were located in the respondents' offices on campus. Both of these part-timers shared their office with at least one other person. The third interview was conducted in the respondent's home; she stated in the interview that she does both her schoolwork and work for her second job in her home. All three interviews were frequently interrupted by people or phone calls, which made the surroundings seem rather frantic, and the interview seem like an island of order amidst the chaos of work and home life.

As Langellier & Hall (1989) have suggested, the respondents at first seemed to desire a more controlling researcher, but then as the interview progressed, they became more dialogic in their responses. This finding suggests to the researcher that initially, regardless of the method employed, the respondent will act according to the conditions established by traditional, masculine scientific research: In other words, people have been socialized to behave as passive sources of information--as "objects" of study--in any research situation. However, as the qualitative interview progressed, the method allowed for more "natural," conversational expressions to emerge--respondents became more comfortable and began to interact as they would outside the parameters of the research project. While qualitative interviews cannot eradicate completely the effects of social conditioning by

traditional scientific research, they do seem to lessen this conditioning as the respondents warm up to the new method.

A final element in the thematic context of the interview involves the budget situation itself. At the time of the interviews, the lay-off letters had "gone out" to most part-timers. All three of the respondents had received a letter; however, one respondent's work was divided between two departments, and she had only received a letter from one of those departments.

The above description offers a situational context for the interview. This element of description is necessary in order to situate the themes which emerge from the data. However, the description step also involves reporting the actual words and phrases used by the respondents to describe the experience as they live it.

According to Nelson (1989), the description step involves conscious choices on the part of the researcher. The researcher must arrange "revelatory phrases" which emerge in the interview according to themes. In this way, the experience is explicated in terms of "relations (differentiations as related for one respondent) and correlations (differentiations as related among respondents)" (Nelson, 1989). The researcher relies on her memory (and notes, when applicable) of the interview situation, in addition to the verbal inflections and pauses that are recorded on the audio tape. In this step, as in the remaining steps in the interpretation, it is up to the researcher to make decisions and choices as to what constitutes a "revelatory phrase." The researcher takes full responsibility for such

choices, and will aspire to describe the reasoning behind these choices as they emerge.

Nelson (1989) suggests that the description step can be accomplished in the following sequence: First, highlight the revelatory phrases in the transcript (or other "text"); second, list the thematic concepts within each response. Listing the thematic concepts itself involves two steps: Identifying thematic topics (and possibly subtopics) that serve as reminders of similar expressions across interviews (correlations), and arriving at thematic descriptions that reflect the complexity within particular interviews (relations).[2]

To report the full description from each interview separately would be beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I will offer brief examples of how I arrived at the thematic topics I have included in Appendix A. Throughout the interviews, the respondents described the impact of the budget crisis on self-image. For example, one respondent offered a philosophical and thought-provoking summary of why she thinks part-timers (including herself) take the situation personally: "I think that we all move on different planes. And intellectually, we can all figure out that this has nothing to do with our particular performance, but psychologically, people will think, are there other reasons why I might not be rehired, even if the budget crisis is somehow resolved?" Another respondent stated: "Anything like this makes you start questioning your competence." These

[2] A comprehensive list of the thematic topics, subtopics and revelatory phrases is included as Appendix A. These topics are arranged in a sequence of decreasing importance (i.e. most to least salient as they appeared to the researcher during the interview and after multiple reviews of the data).

phrases and other correlated phrases were included under the thematic topic "Impact on self-image" because they reflected the perception of the budget crisis as a negative judgment of personal competence or performance.

Some of the topics include subtopics in order to clarify the details of the experience. For example, the respondents all spontaneously described the experience of the budget crisis in relation to other life factors. The thematic topic that emerged from these descriptions was "The impact of the crisis is dependent on other factors." Below that topic, I include two subtopics: "External factors either relieve or exasperate the crisis"; and "Internal factors affect the cognitive/emotional aspects of the experience." I use "external" and "internal" in reference to the job or institution. As descriptive statements under the "external" subtopic, I nave noted a respondent's statement that "Those who truly depend on the income [say]: 'Do we take our children, uproot our children from school. . .?'" This quote reveals that the fiscal and family situation of part-time employees determines the impact of the crisis. Under the "internal" subtopic are statements such as "I've always been treated courteously [but] there are some other people that clearly never know." This statement describes the cognitive perception and emotional reaction of part-timers as dependent on the general atmosphere within their department.

Some of the respondents' statements occurred in pairs, such as personal and professional effects, and within each of those topics, cognitive and behavioral responses. For example, when describing

how the budget crisis has affected her life, one respondent referred first to the effect on her teaching, and then to the effect on her personal life. In describing the effect on teaching (included under "Professional Life"), she revealed a cognitive response: "You just feel like 'Why should I do this? Why should I put the effort into it?'" In the next sentence, she described the behavioral counterpart to this cognitive reaction: "And then my professionalism takes over and I just do it anyway."

The same dualism of cognitive and behavioral subtopics also appears under the topic of "Personal Life" (which is usually described in close proximity with "Professional Life"). In terms of the personal cognitive impact of the crisis on part-timers, one respondent said "It definitely has had a demoralizing effect on part-time people." And in terms of personal actions or behaviors, she added that she likes to "take action. I hate to react; I like to act."

When asked to describe the current situation, the respondents spoke of uncertainty, which was a common term across interviews, and thus emerged as a correlational topic: "The budget crisis is an uncertain situation." This topic entails three essential subtopics. The first subtopic reflects the idea that "No one knows" with statements like "No one really knows until the budget is passed," and "We're in such a limbo in terms of what's out there." The second subtopic describes "The part-time position as inherently precarious": "Part-time people are always in an uncertain situation, and I think this has just sort of exaggerated it." The final subtopic reveals the "Uncertainty in communication about the crisis," describing such communication as

ambiguous and often contradictory: "Yes, we're being told, but nobody knows," and "I'm getting two completely different sets of numbers [from the union and the administration]."

Related to the uncertainty topic were statements about the inability of part-timers to do anything about the crisis. This topic was labeled "Powerlessness," and entailed descriptions like: "Even if people know exactly what's going on. . . it's not going to change the situation"; "You feel that. . . you have a disease, and you. . . have to learn how to live with it"; and "It's out of your control."

Finally, when asked how they might help a fellow faculty member who came to them expressing the kinds of responses they had just discussed, the respondents described two different kinds of help, one was "Direct Support," and the other, "Indirect Support." "Direct support" includes statements like "Listen. . . that's the most important thing," and "I did call. . . [because] I felt she probably is going to be very depressed." "Indirect Support" emerged more in the form of advice: "Telling them to believe in themselves"; "the strength has to come from them."

By organizing the "revelatory phrases" that emerged in the interview into the above form (according to relational and correlational themes), I am already involved in the reduction step of the description process. Indeed, after experiencing the interviews (and thinking about them), listening to or reading the transcripts of the interviews, and identifying descriptive phrases, I have already completed the hermeneutic circle--the description-reduction-interpretation sequence--at least three times. While the above topics, subtopics and

thematic descriptions represent the reduction step in the description, however, they have not quite moved into the actual reduction. They intuitively identify "signs," or meanings inferred from the data. The reduction step takes these signs (topics and revelatory phrases) and reduces them to their essential signifiers through abstraction and generalization from the particular experience.

Reduction

Nelson (1989) describes phenomenological reduction (definition, thematizing) as a process of abstracting from the direct experience to general properties of the phenomenon which are disclosed in the description. This process is fundamentally semiotic, since one proceeds by way of identifying "words and phrases from the interview that function as existential signifiers." Once the "existential signifiers" are identified, they are subjected to imaginative free variation in order to determine whether or not they are essential to the experience. In this manner, the researcher determines which aspects of the experience are essential (part of consciousness) and which are merely assumed (methodological). The reduction does not solidify these "essences" in a move towards the transcendental nature of the experience. Rather, in the final step of phenomenological analysis (the interpretation step), these essential features are grounded in existence.

From the descriptive themes mentioned above, the following existential signifiers are abstracted[3] : "Self-image"; "Dependence on

[3] The existential signifiers are very closely related to the thematic topics that were identified in the reduction phase of the description. The only difference is that they are

life experience"; "Relation to personal and professional life"; "Uncertainty"; "Powerlessness"; and "Direct and indirect support." One of the most interesting themes that emerges as essential to the data is the personal attribution of guilt or blame, or the effect of the crisis on self-image. Through imaginative free variation, an essential structure emerges from this thematic topic. The budget crisis affects self-image and perception of competence because of the close relationship between self and work. This essential element is supported by a statement that I included in the list of salient themes in Appendix A, but not in the description section of this paper. One of the respondents described the teaching experience as a part of existential being: "Being a teacher is who I am."[4] This statement did not seem to fall under any of the major themes identified in the description section. However, after reflecting on my original reflection, it emerged as an essential signifier of the close structural tie between self and work.

The third signifier also reveals this essential structure. "Relation to personal and professional life" implies an inseparable tie felt by the respondents between their personal or home life and their professional or work life. Personal and professional life emerge from the data as a "binary opposition" in that the topics always emerge in pairs, as unified yet distinct elements. Within each "side" of the binary opposition, the effects of the crisis on that realm of experience were phrased in pairs of "cognitive" and "behavioral" effects. This pairing

---

phrased in a general form, so that they are not dependent on "consideration of particular examples" (Lanigan, cited in Nelson, 1989).

[4] See Appendix A.

reflects a full-body experience of the phenomenon. In other words, the respondents described the experience in terms of its effect on all aspects of the self. The whole self thus emerges as closely related to both sides of the personal/professional binary opposition.

In relation to the signifiers "uncertainty" and "powerlessness," I applied imaginative free variation to various elements of the experience. One particular element emerged as absolutely essential to this existential description: the nature of the part-time position. The nature of this position includes the fact that part-timers have the institutional power of "less than" a full employee, but usually do at least as much work as full-time faculty. While a part-time position intuitively implies less of a commitment, this is not the case with part-time faculty.

As indicated in the interviews, part-timers are always aware that their positions are conditional, dependent upon enrollment, etc. Yet, instead of becoming lax in their work, they must work even harder in order to prove themselves so that they will be considered for rehire each Fall. Thus the label "part-time" is inherently contradictory: it does not mean what our "natural attitude" would take it to mean. I believe that this is part of the essential structure of the uncertainty and powerlessness felt by part-timers. Over time, after working for the university for several years, they begin to feel that their position is permanent. However, the crisis has brought the institutional meaning of the "part-time" signifier to light.

The "powerlessness" signifier also relates to the centrality of self--both cognitive and physical self--mentioned in the

personal/professional reduction. One respondent offered a unique and insightful analogy between the experience of powerlessness and a physical condition: "You feel that, you know, you have a disease, and you. . . have to learn how to live with it." This description is a succinct expression of the relation of the bodily self to the experience of powerlessness and uncertainty; it captures the internalization of the experience. Part-time faculty assume a high degree of personal responsibility, psychologically and physically, for what they intellectually recognize as an institutional occurrence.

Finally, the personal/professional, self/work oppositions reveal an essential structure of self/other. Personal life is most commonly associated with self, while we often characterize our work as something outside us, as an other. The theme of "Two forms of support: Direct and indirect" reveals a similar structure. Direct support entails the involvement of self in the other's problem; in other words, it is a gift of self, of personal support. This personal support is abstracted from the body; it becomes an object, an other, that can be transferred to another part-timer through empathy and solidarity. Indirect support calls on the other to find her own strength, from within. Thus the focus of indirect support is on the other's self. Because both forms of support are expressed from the standpoint of the supporter or advice-giver, the terms used to label the support may seem contradictory. From the perspective of the person in need, direct support locates the source of support in an other (the part-timer who is helping), while indirect support locates the source in the self (the part-timer who is helped).

The following paragraph emerges from the above discussion as an essential reduction of the experience:

> Woman part-timers experience the budget crisis through the unification or identification (in the sense of identity-forming) of opposing sides of binary pairs such as personal/professional, self/work, and self/other. The impact of the crisis is dependent on both sides of each pair, and on the tendency of the women to unite these sides. The women interviewed do not experience binary oppositions as opposites, but rather as indivisible parts of a holistic experience which is integrally related to their own bodily experience, and thus affects every aspect of their lives.

Interpretation

The interpretation step in phenomenological analysis seeks to form an enlightened whole out of parts which were initially abstracted from an unenlightened whole. The initial experience has been abstracted from its personal, particular, situational nature. In the interpretation phase, the abstract meaning that arose in the reduction phase is resituated in the original personal and social circumstances in order to answer the "why" of the reduction: Why does this particular meaning emerge from this particular experience?

Nelson (1989) describes two steps in the interpretation. In the first step, the researcher seeks the locus of the text, the key revelatory phrase. To locate this phrase, "the list of revelatory phrases obtained from the reduction phase is critically examined and one or two selected as the meaning (signified) of the discourse" (Nelson,

1989). In the second step, this key revelatory phrase is framed in a "hermeneutic proposition" which makes explicit the implicit meaning in the discourse: that is, the phrase is subject to interpretation in its common sense. By identifying the locus of meaning in an actual respondent phrase, the researcher remains true to the respondents' lived body experience, and avoids imposing her own terms on the definition of the experience. In other words, the meaning that has been abstracted from the respondents' experience is resituated and explicated within the realm of their lived-body presence.

After reviewing the abstracted essential elements that emerged in the reduction phase, I located two revelatory phrases that captured the implicit meaning of women's experience of the budget crisis: "Being a teacher is who I am"; and "We're in such a limbo in terms of what's out there." The first phrase may read like a bumper sticker in a small town, but it actually signifies the meaning of the experience on a much deeper level. Teaching is an occupation, professional life, work--something one does, and thus something that is external, an other. Being is existence, personal life, the self. The phrase situates the two diametrically opposing sides of a binary pair as if they were two equal parts of a whole, two interrelated, indivisible parts. It posits an essential identification between self and work, self and other.

The meaning captured in this first key phrase supports research on women's experience. Gilligan (1985) cites research that suggests that women develop *in relation to* , rather than *through separation from* . Gilligan's argues that women have a worldview substantially different from that of men. Woman's way of viewing the world is

expressed in the ethic of care, an ethic that considers the impact of decisions and choices on both self and other. Foss & Foss (1989) review essays that highlight "the fusion of public and private" (p. 76) as an essential feature of women's experience. This fusion can be seen in the above phrase as the fusion between personal and professional life, and between self and work.

The second key revelatory phrase--"We're in such a limbo in terms of what's out there"--captures the uncertainty and powerlessness caused by the budget crisis experience and, more implicitly, that caused by the fusion between public and private. The phrase explicitly recalls the idea that no one knows the facts about the budget crisis, and that even if they did know, they probably could not change the situation. However, there is more to this phrase than the explicit meaning. The term "limbo" has many implications. We most commonly understand "limbo" as a transitory state, a "hanging-between," neither one nor the other. This interpretation locates the experience in the *boundary* between public and private, the boundary between two sides of a binary opposition which previously had been fused into a complete whole.

Another, less common, meaning of "limbo" refers to "a place or state of restraint or confinement" or "a state of neglect or oblivion" (Websters, 1976). While these meanings are essentially negative interpretations of the phrase, they do not identify the fusion of public and private as a negative tendency in itself. What they imply is that this characteristic of women is detrimental within an institution that does not allow for the identification of self with work--at least not

when it comes time to "let people go." This connotation of "limbo" implicates "what's out there" as the cause of the experience of "hanging-between." "What's out there" is an "impersonal bureaucracy" with no room for "institutional loyalty"[5]--the source of constraint in this experience. It is the nature of the institution that forces women away from a positive holistic experience of their tendency to fuse self and other, and towards an experience of the boundary of this fusion as a tension, a negative experience.

Conclusion

An interesting definition emerges from the interviews that identifies the essential nature of the experience as lived by part-time women faculty during the budget crisis. The two phrases that comprise this definition are "Being a teacher is who I am," and "We're in such a limbo in terms of what's out there." This definition would not have emerged from an objective, quantitative approach unless these elements were asserted beforehand in the form of predetermined categories. Even so, positivistic methodology still would not have provided the rich description of the experience that emerged from the qualitative interview and phenomenological interpretation.

[5] See Appendix A for the source of these phrases.

References

Dallmayr, F. (1984). Language and politics. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Foss, K. A., & Foss, S. K. (1989). Incorporating the feminist perspective in communication scholarship: A research commentary. In K. Carter & C. Spitzack (Eds.), Doing research on women's communication (pp. 65-91). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Langellier, K. M., & Hall, D. L. (1989). Interviewing women: A phenomenological approach to feminist communication research. In K. Carter & C. Spitzack (Eds.), Doing research on women's communication (pp. 193-220). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Lanigan, R. L. (1988a). The phenomenology of human communication. In Phenomenology of communication: Merleau-Ponty's thematics in communication and semiology. (pp. 3-17). Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.

Lanigan, R. L. (1988b). Theoretical models in the philosophy of communication. In Phenomenology of communication: Merleau-Ponty's thematics in communication and semiology. (pp. 18-42). Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.

Lanigan, R. L. (1988c). Life history interviews. In Phenomenology of communication: Merleau-Ponty's thematics in communication

and semiology. (pp. 144-153). Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press.

Limbo. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1976 ed.

Nelson, J. L. (1989). Phenomenology as feminist methodology: Explicating interviews. In K. Carter & C. Spitzack (Eds.), Doing research on women's communication (pp. 221-240). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Presnell, M. Narrative gender differences: Orality and literacy. In K. Carter & C. Spitzack (Eds.), Doing research on women's communication (pp. 118-136). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

APPENDIX A

Thematic topics and subtopics--Correlations among interviews

and

Revelatory phrases--Relations within particular interviews

Impact on self-image

*Despite intellectual interpretation, people take it personally

- "I think that we all move on different planes. And intellectually, we can all figure out that this has nothing to do with our particular performance, but psychologically, people will think, are there other reasons why I might not be rehired, even if the budget crisis is somehow resolved? Is this the time where they're going to get rid of me and have a good excuse to do so?"
- "Anything like this makes you start questioning your competence"
- [Descriptions in respondents' terms]: "Unsuccessful, less-than; You feel very much unwanted"

*Personal reaction is due to nature of part-time position

- "I'm working at it as hard if not harder than some of the full-time faculty"
- There's no loyalty"
- "Part-timers [are] under much more pressure to perform well all the time"
- "Your self-image is suffering under all of that. It might not be a rational reaction, but it's a natural one"

- "Here I've been knocking myself out, trying to do the best I can and now I don't even know what to do, so. . . there's no such thing as institutional loyalty. Bureaucracy is impersonal, and we actually all know that, but when you work someplace for a long time, you somehow start identifying the place, yes, you start anthropomorphizing the place literally"
- "There's sort of a *de facto* permanency established" [for people who have been teaching the same thing for long time]
- "People around you [friends] tend to think you have more security than you really do. . . 'It surely won't be you, you've been there thirteen years'"

The impact of the budget crisis is dependent on other factors

*External factors either appease or exasperate the crisis

- "A lot depends on if you're going to be rehired. . . One of my colleagues, for instance, her health insurance depends on it"
- "Those who truly depend on the income [say]: 'Do we take our children, uproot our children from school. . . ?'"
- "Fortunately. . . my husband has the insurance policy" [He is a professor]

*Internal factors affect the cognitive/emotional aspects of the experience

- "I've always been treated courteously [but] there are some other people that clearly never know"
- "The Chair getting the credit and me doing the work"

*Teaching is a central part of being

- "Being a teacher is who I am"

*The crisis forces reflection on previous life choices (especially for divorced women)

- "I never made conscious decisions, I just went with what was expected of me [marriage, babies, etc]. . . it makes me look at the choices I've made in my past"

Professional life

*It changes the way part-timers cognitively approach teaching

- "You just feel, like 'Why should I do this? Why should I put the effort into it?'"

*Behavior is not adversely affected

- "And then my professionalism takes over and I do it anyway"
- "I don't really think it's showed [sic] in my classes"
- "It makes [part-timers] more protective towards the students"

*Professional morale

- "People who are putting out the numbers on this campus are causing some real problems, and I think some of it's unnecessary . . . in terms of the morale"
- "In sending out the lay-off notices, I think they've done serious damage to the morale of the lecturers. . . and probationary faculty"

Personal life

*It affects people's cognitive/emotional state

- [Descriptions in respondents' terms]: "Worried, upset, depressed, frustrated, frightened, nervous"
- "I think it has affected the morale of the people"
- "It definitely has had a demoralizing affect on part-time people"

*People respond with active personal behavior

- "Take action. I hate to react; I like to act"

The budget crisis is an uncertain situation

*No one knows

- "Yes, who does know?"
- "No one really knows until the budget is passed"
- "We're in such a limbo in terms of what's out there"

*The part-time position is inherently precarious

- "Part-time people are always in an uncertain situation, and I think this has just sort of exaggerated it"
- "Every Spring is bad. . . because there's always the idea that you may not have classes in the Fall"

*Uncertainty in communication about the crisis

- "Yes, we're being told, but nobody knows"
- "I'm getting two completely different sets of numbers. . . one of them comes from CFA. . . the other one comes through the administration"

Powerlessness

*"Even if people know exactly what's going on. . . it's not going to change the situation. . . you feel that, you know, you have a disease, and you. . . have to learn how to live with it"

*"It's out of your control"

*"It just underscores ones powerlessness"

Two kinds of support

*Direct support

- "Listen. . . that's the most important thing"
- "I did call. . . [because] I felt she probably is going to be very depressed"
- "[I] said to him, 'When you get your letter, don't feel that it's only you, we've all gotten it, and so that you don't think. . .'"
- "It's hard to separate yourself actually from your colleagues, in that, you know, you just sort of have this bond with everybody who's in the same situation"

*Indirect support

- "The strength has to come from them"
- "Telling them to believe in themselves" [This respondent used only female examples of whom she would tell that to]